



On the Air with Rav Aviner – #129

From Ha-Rav's weekly radio program in Israel and more

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Choosing a Name for a Baby – part 2

Q: Is it permissible to name a baby after a person who died young?

A: It is customary not to do so. If, however, he died in a plague that took not only his life but many other lives, then his name may be used. Similarly, if a soldier died in the fulfillment of his duty, or a Jew was killed by a terrorist, the name may be used. After all, these are not isolated instances.

Q: Can a non-Jewish name be used?

A: There is no prohibition, but a Jewish name is certainly preferable. As is well-known, our ancestors in Egypt earned praise because they did not change their names but kept Jewish names. Similarly, if someone has a non-Jewish name, it is proper for him to Hebraicize it, but there is no obligation to do so.

Q: Is one permitted to select a name that includes G-d's Name?

A: Yes. For example, when we call a child Michael, we do not mean "Who is like G-d?" (Hebrew: "Mi Ka-El"), it is simply the boy's name.

Q: Is it permissible to give a boy's name to a girl and vice versa?

A: According to the Halachah, there is no prohibition (see Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski's "Ta'ama De-Kera" pp. 119-121), but it is customary not to do so, and it is appropriate to follow that custom. If it is a name shared by boys and girls, like Simcha or Yona, then there is no problem. One should consider, however, whether it might not be hard for the child in terms of having an unclear gender identity.

Q: Can one give more than one name?

A: Although the Chazon Ish was not in favor of doing so, most authorities permit it and you can give one name, two names or three – it doesn't matter (Shut Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot 1:606).

Q: If one has troubles in life, should one change one's name?

A: It's written that if a person is seriously ill, it is customary to give him a new name (Yoreh Deah 335:10).

Q: If the parents have a difference of opinion, who decides?

A: They should work it out between them.

Text Message Responsa

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a week. Some appear in the parashah sheets "Ma'ayanei Ha-Yeshu'ah" and "Olam Ha-Katan." Here's a sample.

Q: My good friend is getting married in a civil ceremony and if I do not attend, he will be offended. Should I attend, and if I should not, how do I explain it?

A: One should not participate in something which is against the Torah. You should explain that he does not have a monopoly on being offended, and just as he is offended, so are you. I do not throw stones at those who desecrate Shabbat despite being offended, but if they invite me to an event which violates Shabbat, I will not come even if they are offended. I do not throw stones at those who eat Treif, but if they invite me to a non-kosher meal, I will not come even if they are offended. And may Hashem have mercy.

Q: I want to marry an Ethiopian man but my parents are opposed. They told me that will not help pay for the wedding and will not attend. Am I obligated to obey my parents because of the mitzvah of honoring father and mother?

A: No. You decide. There is no obligation of honoring parents to perform a transgression – like baseless hatred (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 240:14, 25).

Q: How does one clean strawberries?

A: Cut off the top with a little bit of the fruit. Soak it for two minutes in soapy water. Rinse it with a strong flow of water (Chief Rabbinate of Israel).

Q: Is it permissible to give meat and milk cooked together to an animal to eat?

A: No, it is forbidden to get any benefit from it (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 87:1).

Q: Isn't it a problem to use the non-Jewish names brought from Babylonia for the Hebrew months?

A: They are a remembrance of the second Redemption (Ramban on Shemot 12:1).

Q: Is it possible that someone misses their Beshert?

A: Yes. If he meets a good woman and he rejects her for improper reasons (Re'im Ahuvim chap. 5).

Q: Does one fulfill the mitzvah of learning Torah by listening to a Torah class on a tape?

A: Certainly. But one does not recite a blessing on learning Torah until he says words of Torah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 47:4).

Q: Who takes precedence – my husband or my mother? If my husband comes home, is it permissible for me to stop talking to my mother on the phone?

A: Work it out with your husband beforehand.

Q: How big is a "Ke-Zayit"?

A: A box of matches (see Shut She'eilat Sholomo 1:103).

Q: Is a shower considered "Nine Kavim" for the sake of purity?

A: Yes, with a strong current (see Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 201:1).

Q: Why is it forbidden for women to serve in Tzahal?

A: It is immodest. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel.

Q: What should I do if my father drinks alcohol almost every day?

A: Ask him if he wants help freeing himself from it.

Q: My mother is sick. Should I go to a woman who can check if she has the evil eye or some type of sorcery which is causing it?

A: There is no such thing. She should repent, pray and give Tzedakah (Shut She'eilat Shlomo 3:196).

Q: Ha-Rav said that the claim that one need not wear a seatbelt because Hashem protects us is nonsense. Why – we pray for Hashem to protect us?

A: Hashem also protects us through our intellect. Mesilat Yesharim, chap. 9.

Q: What was the blessing on the manna?

A: Blessed is Hashem...who brings forth bread from the heavens (Sefer Chasidim #1640. And see Shut Yechaveh Da'at 6:12 in footnote).

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